

DCR, DMME To Provide Funding For Straight Creek

Tim Miles, conservation technician with the Daniel Boone Soil and Water Conservation District, in Jonesville, emceed a press event Tuesday, April 30, 2013, at

Leeman Field, Pennington Gap, where state officials announced grant fundings for acid mine drainage remediation work in the Straight Creek watershed.

Miles introduced David Johnson, director of DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation) and Conrad T. Spangler, III, director of DMME (Depart-

ment of Mines, Minerals and Energy), who carried the announcement Tuesday from Governor Bob McDonnell that the state intends to award \$340,000 to fund projects that reduce non-point source pollution from acid mine drainage from pre-Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act (1977) coal mining in the Powell River watershed of southwestern Virginia.

The Virginia Water Quality Improvement Act funds will be awarded upon completion of a 30-day public comment period to end May 22. The grant is in addition to the \$1.69 million award in acid mine drainage remediation funds announced in May 2012.

In reading the announcement, Johnson said, “This grant shows Virginia’s continued commitment to reducing the leading source of water quality problems – nonpoint source or runoff pollution – including from historic coal mining activities.”

Johnson said, “While acid mine drainage is a predominantly Southwest Virginia problem, nonpoint source, or runoff pollution, is a problem statewide. These funds targeted to specific mining run-

off projects are another tool we use to help improve all of Virginia’s waters.”

DCR is the state’s lead agency in reducing stormwater and runoff pollution.

Johnson said the announcement is particularly gratifying to him because he was invited to Lee County in 2010 by Jerry Ingle, DB-SWCD District board chairman, after which other funds were announced and now the governor has announced additional funds for better water quality. He said he is proud to be associated with the DB-SWCD.

Spangler said DMME, which is to provide matching funds of \$400,000 for the project construction, said DMME is equal partners with DCR. He said a balance is needed between the coal industry and alternate fuel sources, with responsibility for the safety of workers.

He said the work he saw Tuesday that is already completed in Lee County is a culmination of efforts over the past 20-30 years, with the money coming from fees paid by the coal industry. “I hope we can all work together for the same environmental purpose which will continue to our children’s children.”

Ingle said he is grateful for the vision that will provide a future of good, clean drinking water.

Spangler explained that the Wagonertown 2 and Penhook projects continue DMME’s successful partnership with local, state and federal agencies to address acid mine drainage problems in the Clinch and Powell River watersheds. He added, “The remediation of AMD in these streams helps ensure the protection of endangered mussels and fish species and provides clean water to the citizens of Southwest Virginia.”

DMME oversees coal, non-fuel mineral mining and natural gas and oil well operations in Virginia and will provide technical oversight on the funded projects.

The projects are part of an ongoing effort to remediate damage from acid mine drainage (AMD) from abandoned coal mining and state and federal funds administered through the Virginia Department of Mines Minerals and Energy are being

used to match state WQIA and federal Clean Water Act funds administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The proposed projects will help remedy AMD seeps along Straight Creek, part of the Powell River, home to many endangered or threatened aquatic species.

Specific sites to be addressed with the new funds are Wagonertown 2 south of the town of St. Charles and the Penhook site draining to an unnamed tributary of Straight Creek. With matching funds, the cost of the projects is more than \$730,000. Virginia receives funding to reclaim abandoned mine lands through a federal reclamation fee on tonnage mined, which is administered in Virginia by the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy. However funding for AMD from historic mine sites is limited by a Congressional mandate to expend the reclamation funds on abandoned mine lands features that impact human health and safety; making the nonpoint sources funds critical to the project.

Miles expressed thanks to everyone involved in obtaining the funding for the projects.

He explained that a pictorial display board at the event showed photos of the before/during/after scenes of projects already completed, included the orange (iron) colored water, seepage areas, partnerships of those involved, construction, end project, personnel for maintaining some areas, and signs of wildlife that show the projects are working. Samples of wildlife seen at the sites include fish (in the treatment ponds), ducks, blue heron, and turtles.

Miles also stated that the Lee County Board of Supervisors serves as the grantee for any acquired properties and easements associated with the project. He said the DCR funding is a small part of the larger Powell River Watershed Project.

Questions concerning the projects or project funding may be directed to DCR Abingdon Regional Manager Kelly Miller at Kelly.miller@dcr.virginia.gov, 276-676-5529, extension 117.



Display Of Progress

David Johnson (DCR Director); Tim Miles (Daniel Boone SWCD Conservation Technician); Jerry Ingle (DBSWCD Chairman); and Conrad Spangler (DMME Director), pictured, left to right, display photos of before/during/after progress of completed projects.



Field Day Event

This group of state officials (and others) attended the field day event Wednesday when funds were announced for acid mine drainage remediation projects for Straight Creek. Pictured, left to right, are: Nathan Osborne (USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist); Conrad Spangler (DMME Director); Kelly Miller (DCR Regional Manager); Steve Jaynes (DMME-DMLR Reclamation Inspector); Jeff Kite (DMME-DMLR AML Program Specialist); Ken Coomer (DMME-DMLR Reclamation Program Manager); Tim Miles (DBSWCD Conservation Technician); Jerry Ingle (DBSWCD Chairman); David Johnson (DCR Director); Samantha Briggs (DBSWCD Administrative Secretary); Shawn Morris (DBSWCD Conservation Specialist); John “Dickie” Bailey (DBSWCD Vice-Chairman). Not pictured: Lisa Cope (DB-SWCD VACS Technical Assistant) who was taking photos.

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